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DOC Responds to Executive Ethics Board Findings

OLYMPIA – The Department of Corrections will be taking several steps following today's release of a preliminary report by the state Executive Ethics Board which has found reasonable cause to believe agency staff violated state ethics laws.

"We received the findings of the board today and plan to review them carefully," said Bernie Warner, Secretary of the Department of Corrections. "However, in reviewing the information already provided to the Executive Ethics Board for their report, my staff found issues which I can, and will, address immediately to ensure the Department adheres to state ethics laws."

Staff named in the preliminary report have 30 days to respond to the allegations. However, beginning immediately, the Department will:

- Review the DOC Use of State Resources policy, to ensure it does not authorize the use of state resources beyond the limits of the state ethics laws. The Department will work with the Executive Ethics Board staff to revise the policy where appropriate and ask the Board to approve the revised policy to ensure it meets their standards.
- Review the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements with three non-profit organizations including:
 - The National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice
 - The National Association of Women in Criminal Justice
 - The Washington Corrections Association

While these organizations promote diversity and provide professional, industry-specific training to staff, they are outside organizations and have been notified that no state resources will be used to support them until a review of the MOUs occurs.

- Direct the DOC Ethics Advisor to work with the state Ethics Board in developing an ethics training program for Department managers and additional ethics information materials for all DOC employees.
- Reassign Ms. Belinda D. Stewart, Communications and Outreach Director, during the course of the investigation.

In addition to these actions, Melanie De Leon, executive director of the state Executive Ethics Board, will meet with the DOC extended leadership team Sept. 13 to review the provisions of the state ethics laws.

“We will continue to cooperate fully with the Executive Ethics Board during the remaining phases of this investigation and evaluate our policies and practices to ensure they comply with state ethics laws,” Secretary Warner said. “We, as a Department, know we cannot take the public trust for granted and are committed to earning and maintaining it.”